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ABSTRACT

Based on over 250 interviews across North America, this book portrays the farm labor system through the stories of migrant workers, the growers and contractors that hire them, and those on the front lines of immigration policy. The first two chapters describe the life of migrant workers and tell the history of the structural inequities that define our farm labor system. The next two chapters present the growers' and contractors' perspectives, followed by a chapter on the U.S./Mexican border. The following four chapters take a closer look at farm labor camps, the social pressures of changing demographics in rural towns that are experiencing new waves of immigrants, farmworker politics, and farmworker unions. A chapter on migrant children describes how they grow up in a world defined by continual uncertainty; where a family lives and what school the children attend are determined by the shifting demands of agricultural labor. Families are often very close from continually working together, but the immediacy of daily life often obscures the long-term value of education. Migrant children miss a lot of school, there is no continuity in their education, and they often work to help support their families. A chapter describing changes in rural Mexican life due to the massive movement of farmworkers back and forth across the border is followed by a plea for restructuring America's farm labor system to reflect the nation's ideals of equality and progress. (Contains an index and photographs.) (TD)

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